

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

----- 000997

O 030638Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1880

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 RANGOON 2336

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BM

SUBJ: REPORTED COUP PLOT AND POLITICAL ASYLUM REQUEST

1. SUMMARY: BURMESE ARMY CAPTAIN CAME TO AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE NIGHT OF JULY 2 CLAIMING TO BE INVOLVED IN FOILED COUP PLOT AND REQUESTING "POLITICAL ASYLUM." REQUEST WAS DENIED AND HE EVENTUALLY LEFT PEACEFULLY. AT OPENING OF BUSINESS THIS MORNING, I REPORTED MATTER TO APPROPRIATE GUB AUTHORITIES. STRONGLY RECOMMEND NO RELEASE OF INFORMATION BY U.S. END SUMMARY.

2. AT 8:00 P.M. JULY 2, BURMESE ARMY CAPTAIN OHN KYAW MYINT, NOT IN UNIFORM AT THE TIME, CAME TO MY RESIDENCE ASKING TO SEE ME URGENTLY. OUR GATE GUARD ADMITTED HIM TO COMPOUND AND CALLED MARINE GUARD AT EMBASSY TO ASK INSTRUCTIONS. MARINE GUARD CALLED DUTY OFFICER, WHO CAME TO RESIDENCE GATE AND COAXED CAPTAIN OUT OF NEARBY BUSHES AND EVENTUALLY INTO HIS CAR PARKED JUST OUTSIDE GATE. CAPTAIN SAID THAT HE WAS AIDE-DE-CAMP TO DEFENSE MINISTER AND CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL KYAW HTIN, THAT HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN PLOTTING A COUP TO OVERTHROW GOVERNMENT, THAT COUP PLOT HAD BEEN DISCOVERED, AND THAT HE WOULD SURELY BE ARRESTED THAT NIGHT, TORTURED, AND EVENTUALLY KILLED UNLESS USG GAVE HIM "POLITICAL ASYLUM" AND GOT HIM OUT OF BURMA. HE WAS NOT DRUNK AND APPEARED RATIONAL THROUGH TERRIFIED.

3. I WAS OUT, AT DINNER WITH PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR, SO

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DUTY OFFICER SENT GATE GUARD TO GET ACTING DCM. ACTING

DCM AND DUTY OFFICER THEN PERSUADED CAPTAIN TO LEAVE WITH THEM IN DUTY OFFICER'S CAR, EXPLAINING THAT I WAS NOT AT HOME AND ONLY I COULD MAKE FINAL DECISION IN THIS MATTER.

4. WHILE RIDING AROUND SIDE STREETS OF RANGOON, ACTING DCM AND DUTY OFFICER ELICITED FURTHER DETAILS OF CAPTAIN'S STORY:

A. CAPTAIN OHN KYAW MYINT, 36, HAS BEEN IN THE BURMESE ARMY FOR 12 YEARS, THE LAST FOUR OF WHICH HE HAS BEEN AIDE-DE-CAMP TO GENERAL KYAW HTIN.

B. ABOUT THREE MONTHS AGO, OHN KYAW MYINT AND FIVE FELLOW ARMY CAPTAINS BEGAN PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW NE WIN REGIME. THEY WERE DISTRESSED ABOUT DISASTROUS STATE OF ECONOMY AND LACK OF FREEDOM IN BURMA AND DECIDED SITUATION COULD ONLY BE CHANGED BY COUP. THEIR POLITICS, AS VAGUELY DESCRIBED BY OHN KYAW MYINT, WERE GENERALLY PRO-WEST, DEMOCRATIC, AND ANTI-BURMESE WAY TO SOCIALISM.

C. THE CAPTAINS' PLANS, WHICH WERE NOT YET FULLY DEVELOPED, WERE TO ORGANIZE ABOUT TWO COMPANIES OF TROOPS AND SEIZE NE WIN AT AIRPORT WHEN HE NEXT LEAVES THE COUNTRY PROBABLY THEY THOUGHT, IN AUGUST WHEN HE IS REPORTED TO BE GOING TO NORTH KOREA).

D. FOLLOWING COUP, CAPTAINS INTENDED TO ASK GENERAL TIN OO TO TAKE OVER LEADERSHIP. ANOTHER SENIOR OFFICER THEY HOPED TO INVOLVE IN POST-COUP GOVERNMENT WAS DEPUTY MINISTER OF MINES COLONEL THAN TIN. HOWEVER, OHN KYAW MYINT STATED SPECIFICALLY THAT NO ONE OTHER THAN HIMSELF AND THE OTHER FIVE CAPTAINS HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN PLOT UP TO THIS TIME.

E. MORNING OF JULY 2, GENERAL KYAW HTIN HAD BEEN CALLED URGENTLY TO OFFICE OF PRIME MINISTER SEIN WIN, AND CAPTAIN OHN KYAW MYINT HAD GONE ALONG. ALSO PRESENT DURING COURSE OF LENGTHY MEETING WERE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE BUREAU CHIEF COLONEL TIN OO, AND DIRECTOR OF DEFENCE SERVICES INTELLIGENCE COLONEL AUNG HTAY. FROM CONCERNED EXPRESSIONS AND

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UNUSUAL ACTIVITY OHN KYAW MYINT KNEW SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT AND URGENT WAS UNDER DISCUSSION. AT END OF MEETING THAT AFTERNOON, HE OVERHEARD REMARK MADE BY COLONEL AUNG HTAY TO GENERAL KYAW TIN TO THE EFFECT, "WE MUST SHOW THEM NO MERCY. WE MUST FIND AND SHOOT DOWN LIKE DOGS ALL THOSE CAPTAINS INVOLVED IN THIS." FROM THIS OHN KYAW TIN DEDUCED PLOT MUST HAVE BEEN UNCOVERED, PERHAPS REVEALED BY OTHER OFFICERS THEY WERE ATTEMPTING TO RECRUIT. HE

ACCOMPANIED GENERAL KYAW HTIN BACK TO DEFENCE MINISTRY, BUT, EXPECTING THAT MIS INTERROGATION METHODS (HE SAID TORTURE) WOULD QUICKLY UNRAVEL PLOT AND ALL INVOLVED WOULD BE ARRESTED THAT NIGHT, ABOUT 7:00 P.M. HE LEFT AND MADE HIS WAY TO MY RESIDENCE.

5. AFTER GETTING ABOVE DETAILS, ACTING DCM AND DUTY OFFICER, WITH OHN KYAW MYINT, DROVE TO ONE OF EMBASSY STAFF APARTMENTS, FROM WHICH ACTING DCM CALLED ME AT PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE AND ASKED ME TO RETURN HOME. I DID SO, AND ACTING DCM MET ME THERE AND EXPLAINED SITUATION WHILE DUTY OFFICER CONTINUED TO DRIVE AROUND TOWN WITH OHN KYAW MYINT.

6. I DECIDED THAT WE COULD NOT OFFER OHN KYAW MYINT "ASYLUM" OR OTHERWISE ACTIVELY HELP HIM IN ANY WAY. I INSTRUCTED THE ACTING DCM TO INFORM OHN KYAW MYINT THAT IF HE INSISTED ON COMING TO MY HOUSE, I WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO TURN HIM OVER TO THE BURMESE AUTHORITIES ON DEMAND. OTHERWISE HE COULD LEAVE ON HIS OWN, AS I HAD, OF COURSE, NO AUTHORITY TO DETAIN OR CONSTRAIN HIM.

7. WHEN INFORMED OF THIS BY ACTING DCM, WHO REJOINED OHN KYAW MYINT AND DUTY OFFICER IN CAR, OHN KYAW MYINT CHOSE TO LEAVE ON HIS OWN. HE ASKED TO BE LET OUT OF CAR AT POINT IN HEART OF DOWNTOWN RANGOON, BUT DID NOT REVEAL HIS FUTURE INTENTIONS.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1881

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 RANGOON 2336

EXDIS

8. DUTY OFFICER, WHO IS TRAINED IN SUCH MATTERS, REPORTED

THAT AT NO TIME WAS HIS CAR FOLLOWED, NOR WERE THERE ANY OTHER INDICATIONS THAT BURMESE AUTHORITIES KNEW OF OUR CONTACT WITH OHN KYAW MYINT. HOWEVER, AS WE HAD TO ASSUME THAT THE GATE GUARD OR OTHER BURMESE IN MY COMPOUND HAD OBSERVED THE UNUSUAL EVENTS, AND THAT WORD OF THEM WOULD GET TO THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, AT OPENING OF BUSINESS THIS MORNING, JULY 3, I ASKED FOR AN APPOINTMENT ON AN URGENT BASIS WITH NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE BUREAU CHIEF COLONEL TIN OO, HE BEING OUR NORMAL SENIOR LEVEL CONTACT ON SENSITIVE MATTERS.

9. I MET WITH COLONEL TIN OO, OUTGOING MIS CHIEF COLONEL AUNG HTAY AND HIS REPLACEMENT COL. MYO AUNG AT 10:45 A.M. AT DAGON HOUSE. WITHOUT MENTIONING OHN KYAW MYINT'S NAME OR POSITION, I TOLD COL TIN OO THAT I HAD RECEIVED A REQUEST FOR ASYLUM LAST NIGHT FROM A MAN IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES WHO CLAIMED TO BE A MEMBER OF A GROUP PLOTTING TO SEIZE THE AIRPORT ON THE OCCASION OF PRESIDENT NE WIN'S DEPARTURE FOR PYONGYANG IN AUGUST. I SAID THE MAN HAD BEEN INFORMED ON MY INSTRUCTIONS (I DID NOT MEET HIM) THAT ASYLUM WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION, AND THAT IF HE INSISTED IN COMING TO MY COMPOUND, I WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO TURN HIM OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES. I SAID THE MAN HAD THEN DEPARTED, FOR WHAT DESTINATION WE DID NOT KNOW. WHILE THE MAN'S STORY APPEARED FANTASTIC LAST NIGHT, I SAID THAT ON REFLECTION THIS MORNING IT SEEMED BEST TO PASS IT ON. COLONEL TIN OO THANKED ME FOR THE INFORMATION, AND SAID
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HE WAS ALREADY AWARE OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND OF THE MAN'S IDENTITY. "UNFORTUNATELY, HE MADE A HAIRSBREDTH ESCAPE FROM US, BUT WE WILL CERTAINLY CAPTURE HIM. I HOPE WE WILL TAKE HIM ALIVE. WE WILL NOT EXECUTE HIM." TIN OO SAID THE PLOT ACTUALLY WAS TO KILL HIMSELF (I.E., COL. TIN OO), NOT JUST TO SEIZE THE AIRPORT. I TOLD HIM THE MAN HAD NOT MENTIONED ANY SUCH INTENT TO US. I ALSO STRESSED THAT THE MAN HAD SAID NO ONE BUT THE SIX PLOTTERS KNEW OF THE PLOT. HALF SERIOUSLY, TIN OO ASKED IF THE MAN HAD GONE ON TO ANY OTHER EMBASSY AFTER LEAVING US -- "THE SOVIETS, PERHAPS." I SAID I THOUGHT NOT.

10. INASMUCH AS THE GUB HAS SO FAR NOT RELEASED ANY INFORMATION ON THE PLOT, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT WE ALSO KEEP SILENT ABOUT IT, FOR HUMANITARIAN AS WELL AS POLICY REASONS. PUBLIC DISCLOSURE THAT THE MAN HAD SOUGHT ASYLUM WITH US (OR ANY FOREIGN EMBASSY, FOR THAT MATTER) WOULD BE HIGHLY PREJUDICIAL IN THE BURMESE CONTEXT. AND IT COULD BECOME A NEEDLESS IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONSHIP.
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